



SHIFT BRIEFING



LADDER INSPECTION BEST PRACTICES

There are two levels of the inspection of ladders.

1. A Competent Person must inspect all ladders periodically and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use. A Competent Person is defined by OSHA as “one, through education and experience, is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards, and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective measures.”

ASK: Who in this agency would be considered a Competent Person for inspecting ladders?

Most senior members would have the necessary training and experience to inspect a ladder. This agency would also back them if their inspection identified a deficiency and removed a ladder from service.

The OSHA ladder standards do not specify the frequency of the periodic inspections. Owners of fixed and portable ladders must determine the timeframe between inspections based on the environment the ladder is stored, mounted, or used. For most ladders, yearly is suggested.

If the ladder is tipped over, exposed to a corrosive chemical, struck by a vehicle, or any other force that could damage a rail, rung, foot, or other ladder component, it must be inspected before continued use by a Competent Person.

Periodic and post-incident inspections must be documented and performed in accordance with the ladder's manufacturer.

2. The User must inspect ladders before each use.

Defective or damaged ladders must be immediately marked or tagged "Do Not Use" or similar language. They should be moved away from normal ladder storage locations until they have been repaired back to their original condition. Make-shift repairs are not permitted.

Ladder inspections

Ladder components should be checked for signs of wear, corrosion, and structural failure, including:

- Rungs - Check for broken split, cracked, corroded or missing rungs.
- Side Rails - Check for broken, split, cracked, corroded, or missing side rails.
- Cracks - Check carefully for cracks; they are hard to see. Cracks weaken ladders.
- Excessive Bends - Check for rungs or side rails with excessive bends.
- Hardware - Check for ladders with loose, corroded, or weakened fasteners and hardware.
- Feet - Check ladders for missing or damaged feet. Ladder feet may have both nonskid pads for use on hard surfaces (concrete) and metal feet for soft surfaces (dirt).
- Coatings or Paint - When ladders are painted, it is very hard for the user to observe defects/damage, such as cracks or dents, and painted areas must be inspected carefully for hidden damage. Wood ladders shall not be painted or coated with any opaque covering except for identification or warning labels which may be placed on one face only of a side rail.
- Oil, grease, and other slipping hazards
- Labels - Check the capacity label to make sure the ladder has sufficient capacity to hold you and everything you are wearing/carrying. Inspect warning labels are present and legible.